The Chairman's Corner



Friday, November 18, 2005

2005 North American Ferry Conference and Trade Show



Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker gave the keynote address at the 2005 North American Ferry Conference and Trade Show which was held in Delray Beach, Florida, on November 8th, 2005. The Acting Chairman summarized several important recent marine investigations and included an update on the Staten Island Ferry Accident, which was of particular interest to the group. He also spoke about the safety accomplishments and adopted recommendations of the Safety Board as a result of marine safety investigations, including improvements in lifesaving, communications between vessels, bridge resource management, fire safety standards for passenger cruise vessels, stricter training requirements for seafarers, and carriage of voyage data recorders.

I-95 Accidents That Killed Yale Students

The National Transportation Safety Board adopted a report on November 16, 2005 on the investigation into two collisions on Interstate 95, the second of which killed four Yale University students.

The accident sequence began about 4:50 a.m. on January 17, 2003, near Fairfield, Connecticut, when a Freightliner tractor flatbed semitrailer slid out of control on a turn, entered the highway median, partially overrode a barrier, and collided with two oncoming vehicles. About 11 minutes later, an SUV carrying nine Yale University students crashed into the semitrailer. The driver and three passengers in the SUV were killed; the surviving occupants were seriously injured.

The Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the first collision was the "Freightliner's loss of lateral stability, probably due to the operator driving too fast for conditions and to the presence of black ice on the roadway." Contributing to the accident, the Safety Board said, was the inadequate treatment of the roadway by the Connecticut Department of Transportation in response to inclement weather. The Safety Board also cited the State's failure to install a median barrier capable of preventing crossovers by heavy vehicles.

The Safety Board also found that the likelihood of survival would have been significantly improved if the SUV had been occupied by a maximum of five persons, rather than nine, and if all occupants had been wearing seatbelts. Only the driver and the front passenger were belted. The Safety Board reiterated a recommendation to the Governor and legislative leaders of Connecticut urging the enactment of stricter laws governing primary enforcement of seatbelt use.

Chairman Designate Advocates for Aviation Safety with the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA)

On November 9, 2005, Chairman Designate Ellen Engleman Conners served as the keynote speaker for the opening session of the NBAA's annual convention in Orlando, Florida. During her remarks, Engleman Conners noted the improving safety records in both commercial and general aviation and suggested the potential yet to be realized with current technological advancements and additional safety training programs. In particular, she stressed the need for continued vigilance by companies and pilots to the subjects of human fatigue and weather-related training. Engleman Conners closed her remarks with both praise for the Safety Board's field investigators for their expert work in aviation accidents and with thanks to the aviation community for its ongoing commitment to partnership in investigations.

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Engleman Conners Emphasizes Board's Commitment Against DUI

Chairman Designate Ellen Engleman Conners outlined the Safety Board's strong support for improved legislation in States across the country to combat impaired driving and hardcore drinking drivers when she spoke before the Congressional Stop DUI Caucus at a public education event on Capitol Hill on November 15, 2005. She stated that the numbers speak for themselves: over 90 percent of transportation-related fatalities occur on the highway, approximately 40 percent of those highway fatalities involve alcohol, and of those alcohol-related fatalities, more than 54 percent involve a hardcore drinking driver. Engleman Conners also thanked those organizations with whom the Safety Board has worked over the years to reduce the impaired driving and hardcore drinking driver problems, including the Century Council, AAA, MADD, and partners in the Coalition to Stop Hard Core Drinking Driving, and pointed to successes in the states of California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia as examples of the coalition's effectiveness.



Engleman Conners thanks the Board's partners in the Coalition to Stop Hard Core Drinking Driving for their work to save lives on our nation's roads and highways.

Academy Releases 2006 Course Catalog

The 45-page catalog – the Academy's second – provides 19 complete course descriptions as well as information about Continuing Education Units and registration. The catalog, which is being distributed to every NTSB employee, is also available electronically (PDF) at ntsb.gov/academy. Requests from outside the agency for hard copies of the catalogs should be sent to academy@ntsb.gov.

Human Factors Courses Draw Domestic and International Agencies

The Academy hosted 152 participants in the two human factors courses held back to back this week -- Cognitive Interviewing for Accident Investigators (Nov. 15-16) and Investigating Human Fatigue Factors (Nov. 17-18). In addition to the attendees who traveled from Africa, Asia and Europe, eleven domestic and foreign agencies were represented:

- · Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board
- Danish Accident Investigation Board
- Department of Homeland Security
- · Department of Interior
- Federal Aviation Administration
- NASA Ames and NASA Langley
- · Nav Canada
- Transport Canada
- · Transportation Safety Board of Canada
- U.S. Army
- · U.S. Forest Service

Increasingly, the Safety Board is recognized here and around the world not just as a highly professional investigative agency, but also as a provider of world-class training products that enhances the investigative resources of a wide range of organizations.

Special recognition goes to David Mayer (MD-1), Malcolm Brenner (AS-50), Jana Price (RE-10) and Dennis Collins (HS-20) who, as instructors in these courses, demonstrated the relevance of the educational materials to accident investigation.

Update on Most Wanted Safety Recommendations

At a public meeting Tuesday, November 15, 2005, the Safety Board reviewed its "Most Wanted List" of safety improvements, a list that calls for action on numerous transportation safety issues by Federal agencies. The acceptance rate of the Board's Most Wanted List has remained consistently high and is currently about 85 percent.

"We are encouraged by the progress that we have seen in the acceptance rate of our recommendations," said Safety Board Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker. "Every one of our recommendations is important, and when implemented, all of them will improve safety. The Board will continue to push federal agencies, industry and private companies for more safety improvements to enhance our transportation system."

Established in 1990, the Most Wanted list is a way for the Safety Board to focus attention on needed safety improvements in all modes of transportation. The list highlights recommendations that the Board believes would significantly reduce deaths and injuries.

